



Government  
— of —  
Saskatchewan

# News Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 7, 2019

Government Relations/Executive Council 19-2280

## **SIXTIES SCOOP APOLOGY - GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN**

Elder McArthur, thank you for the prayer.

Elders, survivors, Chiefs, distinguished guests, legislative colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning everyone.

Welcome to your legislature.

Welcome to Treaty 4 Territory . . . the traditional lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakota and Lakota peoples and the home of the Métis.

And welcome to our Dene friends with us this morning.

Before I begin, I want to recognize members of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Saskatchewan who are with today.

Honoured guests, thank you so much for your participation in the process that has brought us to this point, on this day.

A process that began more than three years ago, under my predecessor, Premier Brad Wall, who first promised this apology on June 24, 2015.

Friends, we would not be here today if not for your determination, your commitment and your courage.

We are deeply indebted to you.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is an important day in the life of our province.

This is a day for our government to acknowledge with honesty, with humility and with deep regret what happened in Saskatchewan.

The Sixties Scoop refers to a period in Canadian history when Indigenous children were removed from their families and their communities by child welfare services.

Thousands of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were placed in non-Indigenous foster and adoptive homes in Saskatchewan, and in some cases across Canada and the United States.

Media Services/Media Relations Legislative Building, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B3 306-787-6281 [www.gov.sk.ca](http://www.gov.sk.ca)



Government  
— of —  
Saskatchewan

# News Release

In Saskatchewan, at that time, those who managed the foster and adoption programs believed they had a moral and legal obligation to act.

However, during the Sixties Scoop, not nearly enough consideration was given to the fact that Indigenous children come from communities with their own rich traditions, culture and history.

Some Indigenous children were separated from their families and their communities, and as a result those children were cut off from their culture, and they were cut off from their traditions.

Despite the good intentions of many foster and adoptive parents, too many of these children were caught between two worlds.

They were stranded in a sense, with no knowledge of who they were, or where they came from.

The consequences are still being felt by individuals and families to this day.

The children impacted by the Sixties Scoop are adults now, and we have heard their stories during the last few months.

We are humbled and grateful that they agreed to share their stories with us.

In partnership with our government, the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Saskatchewan facilitated sharing circles in six communities – Meadow Lake, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Fort Qu'Appelle and Regina.

More than 200 survivors participated in the sharing circles or made submissions online, and we are grateful for their candour, and their courage was inspiring.

Thanks to these brave individuals, we know more about what happened during the Sixties Scoop.

We've taken an important step in raising public awareness, through this partnership.

And we welcome an on-going dialogue with those affected by the Sixties Scoop and their families . . . as we build on other initiatives underway in government and at our educational institutions . . . such as the introduction of curriculum in this province that provides a deeper understanding of the history, traditions and values of Indigenous people.

Today in Saskatchewan, we are more informed than ever about our history.

There is a growing awareness of mistakes that were made in the past, and why we need to acknowledge those who may have suffered because of those mistakes.

We heard from some survivors who asked for their historical records from the Ministry of Social Services, so they can find out more about who they are and where they came from, and learn more about their families and their communities.

Media Services/Media Relations Legislative Building, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B3 306-787-6281 [www.gov.sk.ca](http://www.gov.sk.ca)



# News Release

We have worked to fulfill these requests and we are committed to doing the same in the future.

Each of the sharing circles was attended by cabinet ministers as well as MLAs from the Government of Saskatchewan.

In addition, Deputy Premier Gordon Wyant, Social Services Minister Paul Merriman and Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs Warren Kaeding all met with survivors on a number of occasions.

I had the great privilege of meeting with members of the Society as did the entire government caucus.

In those conversations . . . and in the online submissions . . . the effects of the Sixties Scoop were laid out in detail.

One survivor said: "When I was a child I was taken, placed and abused. That's probably why I get so angry . . . those things come back in my mind. I try not to think about it, but it's still there. I don't know how to heal myself."

Another survivor said she kept running away from foster homes to go back to her family, but each time she was returned to another foster home.

She said: "My sense of security was always temporary. I didn't know my siblings. I met a lot of people who influenced me to start running with the gang lifestyle."

A third survivor recalled returning to his home community. He said: "I wasn't sure if I was a white person or an Indigenous person. People in my original community didn't know who I was. All this time I had thought I was a white boy."

It is difficult for most of us to comprehend what the individuals of the Sixties Scoop went through.

I certainly can't pretend to know.

But I do know this.

In our province, we are only as strong as our families, we are only as strong as our communities.

Family and community . . . those are the bedrock institutions . . . the foundation of a strong Saskatchewan.

We failed the survivors we heard from in the sharing circles, and so many others.

We failed their families.

We failed their communities.

We failed.





# News Release

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan . . . on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan . . . I stand before you today to apologize . . . to say sorry.

We are sorry for the pain and sadness you experienced.

We are sorry for the loss of culture and language.

To all those who lost contact with their family, we are so sorry.

There is nothing we can offer that will fully restore what you have lost.

What we can offer is the solemn assurance that government policies have changed.

And they continue to change.

While there are still too many First Nations and Métis children in care, today we work with 17 First Nations Child and Family services agencies to deliver culturally appropriate child welfare services to vulnerable children in more than sixty First Nations communities.

Whenever possible, we keep families together.

We have strengthened supports intended to maintain a connection to family and culture.

When adoptions take place, we strive to keep siblings together.

We're working actively to recruit First Nations and Métis foster families.

And we're providing cultural training to non-Indigenous foster families.

Our preference . . . our goal . . . is to have no children in care.

Children should be cared for by their families in their communities.

And that's why we're working to support Indigenous people and to strengthen Indigenous families . . .

Through employment, education, health care and cultural programs . . . often delivered in partnership with First Nations and Métis organizations . . .

We've increased support for adult basic education programs, delivered on and off reserve.

We've increased funding for the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and we have strong partnerships with the First Nations University of Canada and the Gabriel Dumont Institute.



# News Release

In our health care system, cultural support programs for Indigenous people are being expanded, including wider access to Elders and healers.

And this year, we will be strengthening addiction treatment programs in Saskatchewan, adding new treatment beds and expanding training for counsellors.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is an earnest and concerted effort underway in Saskatchewan to support and uplift all those in need, including our friends and neighbours still dealing with the impact of the Sixties Scoop.

Everyone in our province who is struggling . . .

Everyone in our province who is vulnerable . . .

Everyone in our province who is in pain and coping with physical and emotional distress deserves our help, deserves our support.

In Saskatchewan, we are one community, and we must comfort and support one another.

I believe that today, progress is being made in many areas, but we know there is more work to do.

We have many miles to travel.

My sincere hope is that we can travel this road together.

Let me close where I began - with a heartfelt expression of gratitude to the survivors.

We have learned so much from you these past few months and years.

You have lit the path forward, by bravely sharing your stories.

And my pledge to you today is that we will honour and respect your experiences.

We will learn from your experiences.

We will continue to engage with you.

And while we will never right this wrong completely, I believe we can move forward with open hearts and a common purpose.

Together, we can build a more compassionate Saskatchewan.

Together, we can build a more respectful Saskatchewan.





Government  
— of —  
Saskatchewan

# News Release

Together, we can build a stronger Saskatchewan . . . for our children . . . and for the generations to come.

Thank you.

-30-

For more information, contact:

Jim Billington  
Executive Council  
Regina  
Phone: 306-787-0425  
Email: [jim.billington@gov.sk.ca](mailto:jim.billington@gov.sk.ca)

